

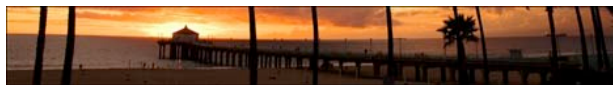
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THIS DAY

Nigeria: Bomb Blast Kills Ten in Maiduguri

13 December 2011

A powerful bomb blast targeting soldiers followed by gunfire rocked Maiduguri, the Borno State capital on Tuesday, with at least 10 people killed, an official and a hospital source said.

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Residents claimed soldiers reacted to the bombing by shooting indiscriminately and burning homes, with troops having been accused of such abuses following previous attacks after alleging residents were complicit, reports AFP.

However, a military spokesman denied the accusations.

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The violence began when two men in a sedan drove towards a military post and sought to throw a bomb at soldiers in the restive city, which has been the epicentre of violence blamed on the Islamist sect known as Boko Haram.

Military roadblocks and outposts have frequently been targeted by the extremists in Maiduguri.

"The explosive device detonated in his hands, killing him on the spot, while his comrade fled, abandoning the car," said Lieutenant Colonel Hassan Mohammed, spokesman for the military task force in Maiduguri.

"We discovered ammunition in the car. No other life was lost and nobody was injured in the attack."

Residents said the blast was followed by sporadic gunfire. They alleged soldiers then stormed through the neighbourhood, firing their weapons and setting houses on fire.

"After the blast, everybody moved indoors, but later I began hearing screams and commotion and saw billows of smoke covering the sky," one resident said.

"I realised soldiers were moving door-to-door setting houses on fire. I scaled over the fence of my house and ran out of the area barefoot while soldiers set fire to my house."

Another resident also alleged soldiers were carrying out the abuses and said people had fled the area. A hospital nurse said at least 10 people were killed in the day's violence.

"So far we have received 10 dead bodies... and 30 others injured, some critically, and from the state of some of the injured, the death toll may rise," the nurse told AFP on condition of anonymity.

"Some of the bodies brought to the hospital have gunshot wounds while others have burns."

Mohammed, the military spokesman, said "nobody was shot and no homes were burnt by soldiers."

The military has come under harsh criticism over its actions in Maiduguri, with some local leaders calling for the task force operating there to be withdrawn.

Thousands of people have fled Maiduguri out of fears of further violence.

Boko Haram has been blamed for scores of attacks, mostly in northeastern Nigeria, though the group also claimed responsibility for the August suicide bombing of UN headquarters in the capital Abuja that killed at least 24 people.

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There has been intense speculation over whether the group has formed links with outside extremists, including Al-Qaeda's north African branch. It is believed to have a number of factions with varying aims.

It launched an uprising in 2009 put down by a brutal military assault which left some 800 dead, then went dormant for about a year before emerging with a series of assassinations.

Bomb blasts have since become frequent and have grown in sophistication.

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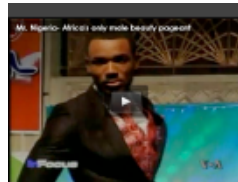
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